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Food and Home Notes

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Never leave uncooked or cooked ham at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Extension Nutritionist warn-Keep it Cold (below 40°F) or Hot (140°F).

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Did you know that creamed onions are considered perishable items? Serve immediately...do not allow them to stand at room temperature more than 2 hours. Use some method of keeping them hot (above 140°).

* *

Hams labeled "cured" or "cured smoked" must be cooked before you eat them. Cook to an internal temperature of 160°F. "Fully cooked" hams are cooked thoroughly in processing and are ready to eat.

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Using whipped cream on those desserts? Add the whipped cream just before serving, don't let it sit on top of that cake and, it should be refrigerated until the very last minute--just to be sure.

* *

What contributes to food poisoning? The right combination of time, temperature, and moisture. It can easily be avoided--if you handle food WITH CARE.

UDSA RESEARCH On Cotton Batting

Cotton batting--the material used for mattresses and upholstery--may now be treated by a new "smoulder resistant" process developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It was previously assumed that treatments that made woven and knitted fabrics fire resistant would do the same for cotton batting.

However, it was discovered that flaming combustion of fabrics is entirely different from smoldering combustion that occurs in mattresses and other upholstered furniture. Agricultural research scientist found this new treatment to be efficient in the use of chemicals and it may be applied at room temperature, thus requiring no additional energy. The results are a permanently treated cotton batting... needing no further treatment during the life of the product.

The new process, less costly than the previous method, has been tested on minimattresses--research tools used in flammability test.

Table 1.--Distribution of retail price according to farm value and marketing function, 22 farm food products, 1973

Food item	Farm value 1/	Marketing functions					Retail price 2/
		Assembly and pro- curement	Process- ing	Intercity transportation	Wholesale- ing		

1/ The farm value is the gross return to farmers for the quantity of farm products equivalent to the unit sold at retail minus imputed value of byproducts. Because of losses from processing, waste, and spoilage the farm value represents larger quantities than the retail unit. 2/ In-store costs only. Headquarters and warehousing expenses are included in wholesaling. 3/ Included in wholesaling. 4/ Included in farm value. 5/ Implicitly included in costs of other functions. 6/ Wheat only, other ingredients included in processing. 7/ Flour milling and bread baking. 8/ Flour only. 9/ Milling, packaging, transportation and wholesaling combined.

THE FOOD DOLLAR

Away, away -- But Where?

Services involved in producing, processing, and distributing food determines how much food you get for your dollar. The retail prices of 22 foods broken down by function -- retailing, wholesaling, processing, assembly, and farm value are shown in the table, Page 2 as developed by USDA's Economic Research Service. The margins for various functions represent the spread between the market value or the sum of estimated costs of a function. (They do not necessarily represent the actual margins of an individual firm or group of firms performing the function.)

The processing or packing margins are less than a fifth of the retail price for meat and dairy items, broilers, eggs, and fresh produce items which undergo relatively little change in form. In contrast -- they are around half the retail price of applesauce, canned tomatoes and catsup.

What else enters into it? The bulkiness, and weight of the products in relation to value -- account for differences in transportation costs among products. In the shipping of meat, dairy, and poultry products -- items of dense volume and of high value -- account for only 2 or 3 percent of the retail price.

Perishable items are usually more costly than other products, due to spoilage and waste...and even selling space occupied in the retail store. Retail margins for oranges, apples, lettuce and tomatoes, averages about two-fifths of the retail price -- or about double the retail margin for most other products.

And the farmers share? It ranges from about 10 percent for canned tomatoes to 70 percent for eggs. that range, of course, goes back to the differences reflecting in the perishability of the product, the bulk, the overall amount of marketing services performed. The farmer's share of the retail price is generally greater for animal products than for crop-based foods.

Water...Will The Well Run Dry?

More than 99 percent of the earth's vast water resource is of little use to mankind. It's either salty or is locked up in polar ice caps, according to a new report from USDA's Economic Research Service. Less than 1 percent of the earth's total water supply is stored in lakes and rivers, as soil moisture, or in aquifers (underground layers of porous rock containing water). That's the 1 percent used for almost all human needs.

Nearly 85 percent of all water consumed is used in rural areas -- that is for agriculture, homes, industry, and other purposes. With agriculture being the largest single user.

We have water -- plenty of water, but, it is not always in the right places at the right time. Quality is also a problem. Some-but not all-of the problems of water supply and quality can be solved by using treatment plants for waste water, recycling water in industrial plants, and building additional storage and treatment facilities.

And, as a nation, we use only a small part of the water available to us. It is estimated that we'll use 11 percent of our renewable sources in the year 2000. (Water consumption in 1965 was just 6 percent of our renewable sources.) So - the picture is not bad in an overall sense. However, there may be some problems of poor water quality and limited quantity in some regions which could slow economic growth.

Limited water supplies often threaten the West and Southwest--and water quality problems are serious in parts of the Northeast and some areas of the West. We cannot afford to waste it. In the future, agriculture, mostly irrigation, will continue to be the main user of water. Management and development of water resources are important--and will continue to be so!

NOTE: Additional information for the MEDIA and photographs (when applicable) may be obtained from: Shirley Wagener, Editor of Food and Home Notes, Room 535-A, Office of Communication/Press Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Or telephone 202-447-5898.
